

**Communicable Disease Epidemiology
and Immunization Section**

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Dear King County School Principals, School Nurses and Administrators:

In order to enhance our surveillance for severe respiratory illness possibly due to H1N1 influenza (swine flu), Public Health is requesting that all public and private schools in King County participate in our online influenza surveillance system. Students play a special role in transmitting influenza in the community. Tracking school absenteeism is an important way of monitoring the spread and severity of H1N1 influenza (swine flu) both in school-aged children and in the community.

Please report absenteeism each week **regardless of whether the levels exceed 10 percent**. It is only necessary to report one time each school week (M-F) when absenteeism exceeds 10 percent on any day during that week. However, if absenteeism **did not** exceed 10 percent, absenteeism can be reported on Friday of that week.

This reporting system has been in place since the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. If you are already reporting, thank you, and please continue to report. If your school has not been participating in school absenteeism reporting we ask that you please begin immediately. Even if your school district has an automated electronic absenteeism reporting system (including Seattle Public Schools), your participation in this online system is needed to gather data on students' illnesses.

We are asking for 100% compliance from all schools in King County to enhance our surveillance for H1N1 influenza (swine flu). Please ensure that this letter and the included instructions are given to the person responsible for reporting school absenteeism.

Thank you for your assistance responding to this critical public health issue. We value your important contributions to our ability to track influenza in King County. If you have any questions, or suggestions to improve the reporting process, please email us at replycd@kingcounty.gov or call us at (206) 296-4774 and ask for the influenza epidemiologist.

Sincerely,

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